SAUL JARCHO AS A TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR

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INTRODUCTION

It is appropriate to consider Saul Jarcho's work as editor and translator as a piece, for it is combined in major works in which he edited and translated documents from earlier eras in medicine. One reviewer, for example, writing about *The Concept of Heart Failure from Avicenna to Albertini*, spoke of its "original and mature organization of a difficult conceptual and terminological problem."[1]

In point of fact, Jarcho's work as editor and as translator goes back in his life to quite separate roots: one, his scientific and medical education; the other, his appreciation of another culture. Both have in common, however, his dedication to proper use of language and his ability to recognize important streams and significant ideas in the history of medicine and in his own time.

There is no way of producing genius by education. The best one can hope for is an educational environment that allows it to thrive. Jarcho's parents must have appreciated this axiom when, some 70 years ago, they encouraged their son to abandon the microscopic drudgery of study in the histology labs of Budapest. Lured from the Danube to the Tiber by the promise of life and, perhaps, even a room with a view at the undeniably correct Pensione California, Jarcho spent the summer of 1926 enjoying the absurdities, as well as the glories, of the Roman world.*

It was in Rome, the city that is threaded with a vast web of Latin inscriptions lining the cornices of buildings, the bases of statues and monuments, the tops of fountains and gates, that Latin and its modern counterpart, Italian, became part and parcel of Jarcho's intellectual armamentarium. It was the city itself, its buildings, streets, and citizens, that started him on the path of becoming

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*S. Jarcho, The American Academy in Rome and Its Summer Course, 1926, unpublished manuscript, 1 September 1994.

our interpreter of the Latin world. He is, therefore, a translator in a very wide sense.

JARCHO AS TRANSLATOR

Things Roman never cease to fascinate Jarcho. Forty years after his summer at the American Academy, he wrote an article updating his beloved Baedeker for historians of medicine, taking us all on a brief walking tour of the eastern part of the city. Combining his love for Rome with his dedication to the history of medicine, he tells us that, by strolling up the Via Nomentana, turning down the Via Spallanzani to the Piazza Salerno, one can find an entire Roman district where most of the streets have been named for physicians, including not only Hippocrates and Galen, but also Mondino de Luzzi, Borelli, and Fracastoro.[2]

There are, of course, still a few historians of medicine who study classical medicine, some of whom know Rome well, but few, if any, share Jarcho's broad range of interests. The tour of the quarter around the Policlinico exemplifies one facet of his mind. The appreciation he wrote some 25 years ago of a French comic strip is another. Why should this eminent cardiologist champion one of the French *bandes dessinées*? How did a cartoon series about Gaul in 50 BC arrest Jarcho's attention?

The answer, simply stated, is that Jarcho has spent a lifetime searching for new ways to bridge the worlds between medicine and the arts, between popular and classical culture, between historical figures and their findings, always seeking to highlight the lessons they teach. In "Asterix the Gaul," he discovered that French cartoonists had found an adroit and delightfully funny way to accomplish goals similar to his own. They had learned to make history not only amusing, but also relevant to children, to their parents, and to anyone else who, like Jarcho, was sufficiently clever to interpret their meaning.[3]

Jarcho's greatest mission as an interpreter, broadly speaking, has always been in making the works of prior investigators available to the modern American audience. His first foray into this uncharted sea was his rendering into English the Hebrew of Isaac Judaeus's *Guide for Physicians*, a work on medical deontology that probably was written during the 9th or 10th century in Egypt or Tunis. Over 50 years ago, Jarcho translated this valuable treatise, which, though lost in the Arabic, was extant in a Hebrew copy. His modern English version provides medical ethicists with an important resource for studying the development of their discipline during the Middle Ages.[4]

When, in 1948, Jarcho discovered that the bulk of Morgagni's writings were virtually unknown to American students and even to American pathological anatomists, he called on American scholars to rectify the situation. Having previously established that to most Americans an untranslated author is an unread

one, he expressed the hope that a person, group, or even an institute would undertake the task. As he put it, someone should reclaim "the older authors from the darkness of the centuries, or from the darkness of our own ignorance."[5] Jarcho's challenge went largely unanswered, however, and he soon realized that if the works of Morgagni, Lancisi, and other 17th and 18th century Italian clinicians were to be made accessible to the American scholarly world, he himself would have to render them into English. Thus, 20 years after first surveying the state of Morgagni studies, Jarcho was still examining various aspects of the Paduan anatomist's *Opera Omnia*, a procedure that he described as "taking a quick peep at a whale."[6]

During one of these viewings of the whale, he discovered the letters that Morgagni and Lancisi exchanged concerning Cleopatra's death. Though initially the topic may sound trivial, on rereading Jarcho's translation one finds that the correspondence reveals how two of the greatest medical minds of the 18th century attacked an interesting problem in forensic pathology. As classically educated physicians, they began by canvassing the pertinent literature, reviewing classical and medieval references, and then comparing and contrasting them with their own clinical and toxicologic experiences and with those of their colleagues. The conclusion that Jarcho drew from his analysis of these writings was that the medical acumen of both of these great investigators had been honed on the study of classical literature.[7]

Jarcho's master work of translation, however, is his epic study, *The Concept of Heart Failure*. In this massive work, Jarcho translated not only the texts of physicians who had described the syndrome, but also the commentaries as they appear in important editions of the original works. We need not, for instance, read Avicenna's opinion on this health problem in isolation. We can profit from the extensive explanations by Jarcho himself and the marginal notes attributed to Joannes Paulus Mogius and Johannes Costaeus from the great 1608 Juntine edition. Throughout his compendium, Jarcho inserts comments on the styles and personal traits of the investigators. Thus, we learn that Malpighi's Latin was mercifully not that of Cicero, and that Albertini's style, though elegant, was less ponderous than that of Morgagni.[8]

In 1992, Jarcho published a translation of a student's notes in hasty Latin that were probably written during the lectures of Nicolaus Cirillus, a Neapolitan professor of medicine. These notes discuss the properties, actions, and administration of a new drug, Peruvian or Jesuit bark.[9] Jarcho's rendering of the text and analysis of its contents was clearly anticipatory of his careful study, *Quinine's Predecessor: Francesco Torti and the Early History of Cinchona*,[10] a work for which he received the George Urdang Medal in 1995.

Translators have seldom been properly acknowledged. James Howell, the

17th century British, or, perhaps more correctly, Welsh, author who translated works from Italian and Spanish (and whom Thackery called "the priggish little clerk of King Charles' council") claimed that

> Some hold translations not unlike to be
> The wrong side of a Turkey tapestry.[11]

Jarcho's renderings turn that carpet over, however. In them, we may admire the complex thoughts that interlace the ideas of others into an artful design through which he, the master weaver, leads us with skillful certainty. His translations are carefully crafted and are designed as aids to sources perhaps inaccessible to others. Often, they stimulate Jarcho to continue the investigation of a particular topic, but they are intended to enlarge the horizons, as well as to assist the research of other, perhaps less linguistically prepared, scholars.

JARCHO AS EDITOR

In still another role as mediator of knowledge, Jarcho has been an editor. He has been an editor in two senses: he edited books and articles, including those he translated, but he also was a journal editor. For 10 years, from 1967 to 1977, he was editor of the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*. So successful was he there that he was called to edit the newly revived and largely historical *Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia* (*T&S*), for which he was consulting editor in chief by 1979—that is, pretty much *de facto* editor, although Ronald Kotrc held that title until 1983, when Jarcho became editor in name as well as fact. Robert J. T. Joy, who had recently taken over the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, wrote to him at that point a note of congratulations with a metaphor that was softened, appropriately, by Latin phrasing: "I particularly admire your courage, because you are by no means a virgin when it comes to editing a journal. All good wishes from one who is now rather regretting the loss of a *hymeni intacto*."[12]

Jarcho undertook the editing of the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* while he was still in practice—a tribute to his efficiency and energy. His tenure was marked by a high and, for a time, increasing percentage of historical contributions, which was notable for one of the few general medical journals still publishing in the second half of the 20th century. Some of the major historical contributions appeared in a book edited by Jarcho, *Essays on the History of Medicine*, published in 1976.[13]*

Jarcho began work on the new *T&S* at least by 1979 and was very actively

*Policies of the *Bulletin* were discussed in Paul F. Cranefield, The *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, *Bull NY Acad Med*, 1967;43:41–48, and Preparation of manuscripts for the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, *Bull NY Acad Med*, 1978;54:975–976. In Jarcho's *Essays* (ref. 13), he offers comments on the place and purpose of historical material in medical journals (preface, pp. ix–xi).

serving "in an editorial capacity," as he put it, in 1980, after he "retired from medical practice" and had only his "research on Morgagni and Malphighi"[14] to compete with his editing. Jarcho left *T&S* at the end of the 1983 volume, but the momentum that he developed continued for some time after officials of the college decided to take the publication in a different direction.

As editor of the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, Jarcho built the circulation and prestige of that journal, as he later recalled, "by sending out complimentary copies, about 100 a month. These went to carefully selected prospects in many countries—to different people in different months, according to the contents. The result," he concluded, "was a huge success." His campaign, he continued, was "based on the system by which Surgeon General Barnes sent out copies of the medical history of the Civil War to scientists all over Europe and thereby established the fame of the US Army Medical Corps."[14]*

In his next editorial assignment, Jarcho certainly was active, and shrewd as well, in seeking out potential contributors, as well as subscribers. He wrote to one, for example, in a humorous vein: "It occurs to me that since you are aflame with literary and intellectual activity, you might have a manuscript. . . . Or perhaps you have an illustrious colleague who might favor us. A sample copy of the utterly handsome periodical is enclosed."†

There are two major aspects to journal editing. One is attracting and choosing material for the journal. The other is shaping the material once it is chosen. In both cases, the published journal stands as a credit or discredit to the editor. The volumes that appeared under Jarcho's leadership still stand proudly on library shelves today, available for anyone to peruse. But, a set of records of his work that was by chance preserved offers some additional insights into his accomplishment as a journal editor.‡

Anyone who has participated in peer reviewing can admire Jarcho's abilities to discern good material and to extract the promise from manuscripts that otherwise would not be publishable. Sometimes, the job was easy: "This paper is eminently worthy of publication. I have just gone over it again and I think little more is

*The actual records of circulation reported by the publishers did not change over many years and are, like many such reports in *Ayer's*, not useful for historical purposes. One medical eminent who received a copy of *T&S* replied, "Thank you very much for the booklet [sic] 'Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.'" Jarcho's ironic comment, to no one in particular, was "Habent sue fata," an allusion to a familiar Latin quotation perhaps best translated as "Books have their fates" or "Every little book has its own fate" (see A. Cree, *Cree's Dictionary of Latin Quotations*, Topsfield, Mass: Newbury Books; 1978:58).

†J.C.B. is deeply indebted to Mr Thomas Horrocks of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia for making these records available; additional thanks are owed to him and his staff for assistance. In the examples that have been taken from these records, no names are mentioned and detailed citations are not included.

‡See note † above.

likely to be needed." At other times, it was not so easy. One very medical editorial note on an article submitted was "No opinion as yet as to acceptability. May need extensive resection." Regarding another submission, Jarcho noted, "Probably Dr. _____'s manuscript can be rescued, but the author needs help."

Although Jarcho did ask other authorities to read and evaluate submissions, he often acted himself as a peer reviewer, as well as editor.* One of the unrecognized forms of peer reviewing has been to use a talented editor as the peer reviewer—truly a peer—without the formality of sending a paper out to a referee. It is clear that Jarcho's judgment was not clouded by editorial constraints, and that an outside referee would not have done a better job than he of passing judgment and suggesting improvements.

Another practice of good editorship that Jarcho embodied was encouraging authors. Sometimes, this was in the course of soliciting manuscripts, as I have noted. To a foreign contributor, he wrote, "I think you *under*estimate your virtuosity in our difficult language," and Jarcho asked for more articles. His letters of acceptance were individual, and he noted to the author of one manuscript, "It is clear (to this medical reader) and extremely interesting and we welcome it." And, sometimes the encouragement took the form of just gentle treatment. With one author, for example, Jarcho waited until a postscript at the end of his letter to mention that "You have omitted the title of your work."

Jarcho was adroit in coaxing writers who produced quality articles to send more. He wrote to one author from whom he had successfully solicited a submission: "I have just had the pleasure of rereading the proofs . . . , and I thank you for an attractive and stimulating contribution. We shall welcome any further essays that you might wish to send us"—and, in fact, he did get a second article from the author.

Many of the leaders of both history and medicine in the United States and abroad, as well as those who were much more ordinary workers in those fields, benefitted from Jarcho's editorial hand. Once his assistant editor forwarded a manuscript to him with the comment, "A Xerox of the review is enclosed for the usual Jarcho plastic surgery and face-lifting."

Indeed, in some cases, Jarcho essentially rewrote not just sentences and paragraphs, but whole pages of the works of beginners and the most prestigious scientists and scholars. In one case, he went through once and then requested that the manuscript be retyped "with ample spacing for additional emendation." Jarcho even went so far as to cut and correct the expression and content of the acknowledgements note in a manuscript.

*No mention is made here of Jarcho's work as a member of editorial boards and as an anonymous peer reviewer on other journals. Many of us benefitted from his comments without ever knowing who our benefactor was.

Both those who have assisted in editing manuscripts and those who have had their manuscripts edited can appreciate why Jarcho was such a successful editor. Perhaps the subtlest impact of an editor is the way in which he or she maintains quality within articles that are published. Readers reported that they had a sense that Jarcho was conducting a very high-grade operation, but it was the authors who could testify to the actual substance of Jarcho's quality control. His sharp eye often picked up problems of carelessness or other lapses by otherwise creditable authors. One of his internal notes reads: "Please request [x]eroxes of all pages cited. I am not confident that the transcriptions are correct." Another note was, "The etymological comment on p. 3 requires evidence." To another author, Jarcho tactfully offered references to other papers on the same subject, papers that the author had overlooked. But, he coupled that elbow jogging with the suggestion that the author might want to add to the historical material observations from his own clinical experience.

Jarcho also brought his own scientific and clinical background to bear to catch authors' lapses. In one case, he had to add a stipulation of what drug the author was referring to. To another author, he wrote, "The remark that Richard Morton 'was the first to diagnose tuberculosis' is a misunderstanding. Morton may have been the first (?) to use the term tuberculosis—this you may want to check in the Oxford Dictionary—but the disease, under the name of phthisis, was well known in antiquity (see for example Kuhn's Galen XIX. 419). For these reasons we favor an unobtrusive revision: 'Dr. Richard Morton contributed a classic study of tuberculosis.'" In another manuscript, Jarcho rejected the sentence, "Cholera thrived globally throughout the nineteenth century," and questioned both the accuracy of the language and the facts: "The disease," he noted, "was intermittent. Can a disease be said to thrive? Was cholera really 'global'?" On another occasion, on a botanist's paper, Jarcho alerted the assistant editor, "CAUTION: a few botanical terms are misspelled!"

Certainly one of the themes of Jarcho's work is his sensitivity to language in general and English expression in particular. He repeatedly corrected improper possessives, such as "science's" and "mineralogy's." He would not, of course, tolerate split infinitives, changing "to better deal with the threat of" to "in order to deal better with the threat of." He was alert to the use of nouns as adjectives, changing "plant specimens" to "botanical specimens." Sometimes, he just noted, "AU: please provide clearer phrasing."

Like other editors, Jarcho did have periods of discouragement. He confessed to one friend, "It is always pleasant to receive your vivacious letters. So much of what we receive in the mails is weary, vain, flat, stale, and unprofitable."

One particular hallmark of Jarcho's editing was his modest, that is, unobtrusive and anonymous, approach to his work. Typically, for example, he would ask

other members of the editorial staff to send his corrections and suggestions without ever mentioning just who in the office had made them. When he had taken a great deal of trouble with a set of papers that were being gathered to appear as a book, he wrote to the chief mover in the project, "I am honored that you wish me to be an editor of the contemplated volume, but I am utterly unable to assume this task in addition to the excessive loads I now carry, since the tissues will creak. I also offer you whatever I have done as a free gift and I do not consent to have my name mentioned or to have any acknowledgment made." Indeed, one letter of appreciation, addressed to the assistant editor, showed how hidden Jarcho's hand was: "Thank you and the editorial staff [sic] for improving our manuscript and for the care with which it was reviewed. We appreciate the attention to detail."

The editorial talents that appear in Jarcho's work as a journal editor appear also in books that he edited. One was a collection of papers on human paleopathology, based on a symposium held in 1965 that represented an attempt to reinvigorate the field. Jarcho's conclusion summarizing the purpose and direction of the papers was remarkably concise, and his part in the editing was done virtually silently. But, it turned out all to be "on the advice and under the direction of Dr. Saul Jarcho."[15]

CONCLUSION

The evidence of Jarcho's range of abilities and his dedication to excellence is obvious in his work as translator and editor. His concerns are also evident: concerns to convey what he could see to those with more limited perspectives and to assist those who had contributions to make, to make them, and to make them better. His role goes far beyond being a midwife to ideas. He is an interpreter and cultivator of knowledge.

Yet, it is difficult to convey, especially to the younger devotees of the history of medicine, what Jarcho's impact has been and what he stands for in that field. How can one re-create the feelings of admiration, wonder, and affection we, the youngsters of the 50s and 60s, felt for people like Saul Jarcho? Our generation and the generations that follow ours have and will certainly produce extraordinary historians and remarkable teachers, but we still feel that, in the days when people such as Temkin, Edelstein, Sigerist, Sarton, and O'Malley were at the height of their powers, giants walked the earth. Saul Jarcho, in his life and work, attests to the fact that at least one still does.

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